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SOME RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FRANCE

THE recent report of the Commission on Secondary Education in France has some very interesting comments upon the trend of education in that country. It appears that the population of the *lycées* and *collèges*, after steadily rising until in 1884 there were some 91,000 pupils, has been steadily falling, and today there are but 85,000. This loss has been among the boarding pupils. The private clerical schools have been the gainers and have increased by 16,000 pupils during this same period, so that they are now in a decided majority. Arbitrary and defective distribution and unsuitable buildings are urged as some of the reasons for this decline, and specific instances are cited. Paris with three millions has sixteen *lycées*; Marseilles with half a million, but one. At Valenciennes provision was made for one hundred and fifty boarders; there are at present forty-three. The *lycée* of Bordeaux is a made-over cavalry barracks; the *lycée* of Montluçon was built at a cost of nearly two million francs for eight hundred pupils, and there are less than three hundred.

The report says: "Twice as much as was necessary has been spent in building and today twice as much as is necessary is being spent in maintaining buildings that serve no purpose. But the indifference to the financial interests of the state is as nothing compared to the pedagogic aberration revealed by the existing state of things." This is followed by an examination of some of the *lycées* of Paris most of which are built to hold from one to two thousand pupils, and one does actually hold 1847. These are what the commission dubs "pedagogic monstrosities," where the individuality of the pupil does not get a fair chance and where everything savors of barracks life and discipline. Perhaps the one of the recommendations which may be of special interest to secondary school teachers in this country will be that relating to the proposed changes in the curricula and programs. These are grouped as follows:

1. *General*.—The programs to be much less specialized, and the *proviseurs* to have a much freer hand in applying them; greater elasticity to be assured in the choice of subjects; the system of graduated courses (*cours gradués*) in each subject to be substituted, as far as possible, for that of classes; no lesson period to last more than an hour.

2. *Classical side*.—The classical course is to be divided into two cycles of three years each; the program for the first cycle to include moral education, civic instruction, French, Latin, one modern language, history, geography, the elements of mathematics, and drawing; Latin to be taught in three graduated courses of a year each, each master, wherever possible, keeping the same boys for the three years; Greek, which is optional, to begin in the third year; the second cycle to include (a) the following compulsory subjects: French literature, Latin literature, Greek language and literature, history from the point of view of the development of civilization, geography, and philosophy; (b) the following optional subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural history, and modern literatures.

3. *Modern side*.—The modern side curriculum also to be divided into two cycles of three years each; the program of the first cycle to include moral education, and civic instruction, French, one modern language, history, geography, the elements of science, and drawing; optional complementary courses—commercial, industrial, or agricultural—to be added to suit local conditions; the second cycle to offer a choice among mathematics, physics, and natural science, French literature, modern languages and literatures, philosophy, history of civilization, geography in its relations to political economy, and drawing.

4. *Modern languages and drawing*.—In the first cycle the teaching of modern languages is to be essentially practical; sufficient time to be devoted to them to enable the pupils to read, write, and, so far as possible, speak the particular language they are learning; pupils to be separately classified for each language; municipalities and chambers of commerce to be asked to assist in the provision of traveling scholarships; drawing also to be taught in separate classes, to have more time devoted to it, and to carry marks in all examinations.

At the end of the first cycle an examination is recommended to be held for the Certificate of Secondary Studies, and at the end of the second cycle an examination for the Diploma of Higher Secondary Studies (either classical or modern); this diploma is to take the place of the existing *Baccalauréat* in all its forms and to be the passport to the university. It seems that some of the examiners will be chosen from among the secondary school teachers and that credit will be given at the examination for the note books of the students.

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